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ABSTRACT

Historical studies have tended to take a simplistic view of minority groups as passive victims of an oppressive and racist public school system. This book looks at Mexican Americans as active agents in history and documents their quest for educational equality in Texas--a state notorious for its record of inferior and separate schooling for Mexican Americans, and the first state in which Mexican Americans organized a statewide struggle for equality in the public schools. The book is divided into three historical periods. Part I, 1910-40, overviews the historical context of Mexican American education, describes educational policies and practices developed by state and local officials as Mexican American enrollment increased, and focuses on the founding of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) in the 1920s. Part II traces educational developments during 1940-65; discusses effects of the Good Neighbor Policy during World War II on public policy and the status of Mexican Americans; describes legal, administrative, and political mechanisms used by LULAC to fight school segregation; and examines LULAC's efforts to provide English instruction to preschool children. Part III, 1965-81, describes important civil rights, educational, and poverty legislation of the 1960s; the emergence and efforts of the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF); and the role of Mexican Americans in the evolution of bilingual education policy. The final chapter concludes that, despite notable accomplishments, Mexican Americans have failed to eradicate educational discrimination in Texas, a failure due largely to the continuing lack of political power in the Mexican American community. This book contains references in chapter end-notes, an extensive bibliography, and an index. (SV)